

Discussion Guide
for
*Lay That Trumpet In
Our Hands*

Diane Cichocki, Kellee Kebler,
Nancy Lange, and Kaytie Palmiter

Discussing *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands*

Important items to remember: We all bring our own prejudices into what we read, experience, say, think, etc. Keep your own prejudices in mind when you discuss with students – try to take a neutral position so as not to influence students into having the same prejudices you have. Also – remember students come to class with their own prejudices – many stemming from family conversations/prejudices/beliefs. Some just repeat what they have heard at home. Students may have no idea how other people may interpret their own prejudices – just like they may be surprised after hearing others discuss and opening their view point. For some students – this could be emotional depending on what topic is discussed.

Facilitating Discussion – A facilitator ...

- Helps the group set up ground rules
- Manages the discussion
- Keeps the conversation respectful and productive
- Stays neutral – does not take sides
- Helps the group look at many different points of view
- Helps everyone participate in the dialogue
- Takes notes as conversations unfold
- Keeps track of time – make sure one person isn't hogging the conversation
- Is culturally sensitive – please be aware and remind students to be culturally aware others may or may not share their opinion – but the purpose of discussion is to allow us to see other's points of view and to open our mind. We may not agree – but we can try to put ourselves in someone else's shoes.

Responsibilities of the facilitator...

Facilitators make sure to 1) know the material – read the book and questions, think about possible responses beforehand. 2) Have students rearrange where they are to make a warmer environment for discussion (post notes on the wall about previous discussions, rearrange chairs, etc.)

Conversation prompts to help with discussion...

- What seems to be the key point here?
- Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about this?
- Could you talk a little about why you feel the way you do?
- What experiences have you had that would help us understand what you think?
- What would be a strong case for (or against) what you just said?
- What do you think is really going on here? Why is that important?
- Do you think others see this the way you do? Why or why not?

General Conversation in relation to Lay that Trumpet:

- There are many racial/social/cultural barriers in the novel. What are some barriers we have in our own school? Community?
- Have you ever felt unwelcome or rejected by others?
- Have you ever been part of a group that rejected someone?
- What could you do as an individual to break a barrier? (Think back to Rachel's challenge!!)

Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2:

- What do you know about the KKK in the south?
- How do you think the images of Marvin will affect Reesa?
- Reesa's dad learned to channel his temper by playing the piano. What do you do when you are really angry? How do you channel your feelings into something more positive?
- What does the McMahon family own and operate?
- Explain how Marvin's death was a "mistake".
- Write one sentence each about all the characters met in chapters 1 & 2.

Chapters 3-6:

- Since the Klan is in all levels of the legal system in the state, what plan do the McMahons come up with to get rid of the Klan?
- What is the plan to rid the state of the KKK or diminish the power?
- Marvin tells an interesting story on page 28 of bees and angels. What does the story tell you about Marvin, his culture, and his relationship to Marie Louise?
- If you have read *To Kill a Mockingbird* compare the prejudice and ignorance described in each of the books - what is similar and what is different?

Chapters 7-8:

- What does NAACP stand for and what do they do?
- Do you agree with Armetta's refusal to return to work for the Garnet family? Why or why not?
- Who is Harry Moore? Why did he visit Luther and Armetta?
- On page 48, Luther insists on calling the McMahon's by their formal name even though they are his peers. There are two types of segregation – De Jure Segregation and De Facto Segregation, using the below definitions, find examples through chapters 7 and 8.

De Jure Segregation – racial separation established by law

De Facto Segregation – racial separation established by practice or custom, not by law

- Unless people bring it up, grieving for a person is best done sideways – what does this mean (p54)?
- What were the Bluejays trying to tell Miss Sookie about her garden?
- Why does Reesa shame herself in chapter 8? Have you ever realized you did something you were unaware of that was negative towards other people?

Chapters 9-11:

(chapter 9)

- In chapter 9 Armetta says, “God is the potter, she said, and we clay in his hands, soft and weak which don’t do at all. It’s our time the fire, don’t y’see, that gives us strength and shows His purpose. Without that, we couldn’t hold water. Y’understand?” She also goes onto say, “Time in the fire don’t burn us, y’see, it helps us be ready for whatever’s ahead.” Do you agree with Armetta’s statement? Do you believe there are events in life that happen, and the only reason they happen is to help make us stronger or prepare us for the future? Explain your answer.
- On page 61 Armetta tells her Reesa Roo that “there’s no explainin’ the meanness in this world...But there’s goodness here too. You can’t never lose sight of that, hold on to it. It’s the goodness that gets us through.” Do you believe that in the midst of evil there is goodness? Explain your answer.
- In chapter nine, May Carol’s mother begs Armetta to return to her job in their household. What does this scene reveal about the balance of power between adults and children in Mayflower, and between blacks and whites? Were you surprised Mr. Garnet made no effort to hid his KKK robe from Armetta?

(chapter 10)

- Reesa states “someone must have put grieving to music.” Do you have a particular song, or genre of music that you like to listen to when you are feeling down? What is it, and how does that help you? If you don’t listen to music, what do you do when you are feeling down?
- Marvin once told Reesa “baseball’s a bit of Heaven on Earth and Ah can prove it too.” What does Marvin mean by this? What is your piece of Heaven?

(Chapter 11)

- Do you believe this chapter realistically portrays the way in which the law enforcement dealt with racial issues? Explain your answer.

Chapters 12 – 13

- In Chapter 12 Reesa and Vaylie find an old newspaper talking about a local Hero. Who is your hero and why?
- How is rural childhood different in the 1950’s Florida (with rattler races and abandoned sink holes) from modern day childhood?
- Why was it so important for African Americans to be able to vote? Think beyond ideas of right and wrong.

Chapters 14-17:

- Chapter 14 begins with J.D. Bowman. Thinking about how Reesa is treated by the man, how do you think the lives of the twins are living in his house? What types of behavior could we expect from the boys when they are grown men?
- The KKK targeted three groups – African Americans, Jews, and Catholics. Why do you think these three groups were targets?
- Consider the many references to baseball, why are these important? What do you know about the role of athletics in desegregation? Why do you think the desegregation of sports often preceded other forms of institutional desegregation?

- What are Jim Crow laws? How did they play a part in the 1950's? What "silent" laws in present day compare to the Jim Crow laws of the 50's?
- What examples can you think of fitting Warren's statement, "Best way to get people rooting for you is to accuse your enemy of being something worse than you are"?

Chapters 18 – 21:

- Who do you think is lying about the transport of Walter Irvin and Samuel Sheperd by Sheriff McCall? What do you think really happened?
- Reesa thinks to herself – "Who would even think of harming Mr. Harry [T. Moore]?" Why would people view Harry as a threat?
- In chapter 21, Reesa is concerned about her mother's "poker face." What do you think is weighing on her mother's mind?

Chapters 22 – 24:

- In chapter 22, the McMahon family is given their first television... How has technology changed over the past 50-60 years?
- Sal and Sophia are Italians. Why are they targeted by the KKK? What would you do if you were in their shoes?
- The Moore tragedy recently was found to be caused by the KKK. Look online to find the information. The daughter who was in the next room died fairly young from a heart attack (she was an extremely anxious person after the incident). The oldest daughter, Henriette, also suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. At the time of the incident, most of the details were "swept under the carpet" with no resolution as to the perpetrators. Why do you think this was allowed?
- In chapter 24, Reesa's mother models "proper showroom behavior." The rules are simple – people on vacation have no interest in the lives of those in Florida. Present the Florida of their fantasies. Why is Florida such a hot spot for travel? How do you think all the events of the early 1950's affected travel?

Chapters 25-27:

- The racist language in the novel is historically accurate for the time period. How have times changed or not changed in regard to racist language heard today? What are some words used today that are considered hateful – think about racism, sexism, anti-semitism, etc.? Why do people continue to use words that are hateful to others?
- What kind of consequences could come with Warren's acceptance to help the FBI?
- Have you ever felt treated like a baby? Do you think it is appropriate for Reesa (at her age) to have as much information as she has in relation to all going on in the novel? Why or why not?

Chapters 28 – 30:

- Why are the children shot at by the Klan?
- Why did Ren and Petey believe they were safe from the Klan? Why is this a false belief?
- Would you take the challenge Mr. Jameson presents to Warren? Why or why not? What could happen if he is caught?

- The women of Luther's "C.I.A." could be crucial in details they can provide for Warren's plan. Why type of support do they provide that no one else can give? How and why does this information alter the original plan?

Chapters 31 – 32:

- The title of the book makes a reference to the bible story the Fall of Jericho. How does the Battle of Jericho mirror the incidents in the novel?
- Luther asks God to "Lay that trumpet in [our] hands." The trumpet is a metaphor for what? What is the "trumpet" and whose "hands"?
- What is discovered in the items brought back from the Klan headquarters? How could these items incriminate men in the Klan?

Chapters 33-35:

- Does the response and arrangements made by Mr. Garnet surprise you? Why or why not?
- Does the list of events the KKK participated in surprise you (page 238-239)? Why or why not? How would these events be considered hate crimes?
- Make a prediction: what do you think the Klan will do to Warren?

Chapters 36 – 39:

- How does Reesa and Vaylie each provide a shoulder for each other to lean on through their family troubles? Who do you lean on during difficult times?
- Knowing Warren is a non-violent man believing in justice, what do you think he might plan to do?

Chapter 40 + author's note:

- Do you think it is Warren's turn? How does his behavior and response seek justice for his family in a non-violent way?
- How does Warren and the events at the McMahan house compare to Atticus and the events at the Finch house?
- The author had to change the names and stories of the Klansmen in order to protect their families. What do you imagine the original stories might say?
- How do the events of the novel change your view of Florida?

Author Visit:

- Mrs. McCarthy touches on hate crimes during her presentation. Are you shocked at where Michigan ranks? Why or why not?
- Michigan is ranked 3rd in the nation for hate crimes. Why do you think we are ranked so high? What can you personally do to prevent social injustices to those around you?

Prereading Guide for Lay that Trumpet

1. What is a “hate crime”?
2. Every year, each state is ranked in the number of hate crimes. What state do you think has the most hate crimes for 2006? (This would be the most current statistics, since 2007 just ended.)
3. Where do you think Michigan would rank among all 50 states in the number of hate crimes? (Give a number – 1 being the worst, 50 being the best.)
4. When you think of the state of Florida – what words/thoughts come to mind?
5. What rank would you give Florida for the number of hate crimes in 2006?
6. If you had to guess, which state(s) (out of all 50) do you feel would have the most KKK members back in the 1950’s?
7. What group(s) do the KKK target?
8. What are Jim Crow laws? List which ones you know.

Content Area Connections for Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands

Nutrition Education –

- P 57 – How does the acid in foods (specifically orange juice) affect your body?

Music –

- P 46 – play Rhapsody in Blue for the students – can they sing/play and adapt this song in a different way? Can they put words with the song?
- P ?? - play “Choo’n Gum” by Teresa Brewer & Dixieland All Stars
- Why do you think Mr. Warren preferred being the church choir director to being a Deacon?
- Part of Chapter 7 describes Luther's musical talent and how it helps him express his grief. Have you found listening to or making music a way for you to deal with grief or disappointment? Why?

History -

- Discuss Jim Crow laws (pages 55-57)
- Discuss black voter registration (pages 76 & 96) and black voting rights
- Discuss Greece and democracy (page 97)
- Have students look up more in relation to the bombing of Carver Village Housing project in Miami, Jewish Center of Miami, and St. Stephen’s Catholic Church (page 106)
- Discuss the important leaders in history – Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito (p98)
- Discuss famous important African American leaders and their role in American History – NAACP Attorney Thurgood Marshall, Harry T. Moore
- Share excerpts from *Before His Time* by Ben Green – focuses on Harry T. Moore and his family, discusses in-depth historical issues – like the Groveland case which is in the novel
- Research Melvin Wolmack – “Marvin Cully” in the novel and the Groveland Four

Science -

- Discuss the differences of the ecological system in Florida versus Michigan
- Discuss snakes – specifically Diamondbacks (page 86-87, 126-127)

English –

- Make a connection chart between *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Lay that Trumpet* – how are the stories similar? How are they different?
- Compare Scout/Jem and Reesa, Mr. McMahon and Atticus – there are many parallels between these characters

World Studies –

- Look at the geography of Florida – look at the routes and cities described in the novel

